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ABSTRACT

Working as a family systems therapist with Native and non-Native families, the author observed two opposing social systems. Non-native families systems typify "The Box System," whereas native family systems portray "The Circle System." A few characteristics of the Circle System are: (1) a focus on life and peacefulness; (2) females and children are respected and honored; (3) learning is based on direct experience; (4) inner experience is communicated through storytelling, allegories, myths, and art; (5) communication between people is honest and direct; and (6) the goal of life is to achieve a Oneness with others. In contrast, the Box System: (1) idealizes war; (2) is white male dominated; (3) is hierarchical; (4) suppresses emotions; (5) rules through authority and domination; (6) creates labels to determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong; (7) sees money as power; and (8) emphasizes memorization and a logical step-by-step approach to learning. In the history of North America, the non-natives in the Box System imposed oppression and control upon the Circle System. Members of the Circle System show signs of stress under this oppression, similar to those of war veterans. These include high levels of anxiety, sexual dysfunction, a hopeless approach to life, use of addictive substances, and family dysfunction. Healing can take place by switching from the Box to the Circle. There is some evidence that the Box System has softened, and the First Nations' People may lead the return to the Circle. (KS)

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THE BOX AND THE CIRCLE - TWO SYSTEMS OF LIFE
A Model for Understanding Native - Non-Native Issues

Jann Derrick

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I. INTRODUCTION

A System is a Whole living being composed of many parts together with the relationship between those parts. The Whole therefore is greater than the sum of its' parts. It is the interaction of relationship between the parts that is vital to the functioning of the Whole. The system cannot function without interaction and relationship.

Whenever any part shifts, alters form or changes position all parts must also shift, alter form or change position in order that the Whole remains whole and maintains balance and harmony within itself. Otherwise the system will disintegrate. All parts are important to the functioning of the Whole no matter whether they are weak, strong, small, large, or what role they play in the functioning of the Whole.

A System functions according to a set of laws or rules. In a system of nature there are basic laws or truths; birth, growth, maturity, reproduction, death. In a system such as the legal system (created by humans) a set of rules is created and followed in order for the system to function.

A living System recreates and maintains itself overtime. Therefore, one of the truths and functions of an alive system is that it must act to produce new growth and then function in such a way that the new growth can mature. In a human family system, the family must reproduce itself by giving birth to children and then function in such a way that the children can successfully live and grow and mature.

All Systems have basic needs in order to function. For the human family system these needs are physical shelter and food, emotional maintenance, spiritual productivity, mental stimulation, active relationships and interaction, personal power, etc. In contrast, a computer system has other basic needs; microchips, electricity, metal casings, human operator, etc.

This paper focuses upon living Systems and addresses two Social Systems that exist within our present society. This model of two distinctly different Social Systems has evolved from my work as a Family Systems therapist so that I view these two systems as reflecting a multiplicity of families interconnected together on a large scale. The families of each system share common values and beliefs about connectedness, relationship, functioning, laws, etc.

This model also emerged from my work as a Family Systems therapist with both Native and non-Native families. I began to note distinctly different beliefs, world views, values and functioning in Native families as opposed to non-Native families (my original training). I also noted that as a therapist I found Native families easier to work with and relate to than non-Native families, and that Native families intimately understood Systems theory. For non-Native families, systems theory was a very new approach and often treated as suspect.

Personally, I noted a great change in me as I incorporated into my own life what Native families taught me about relationship, beliefs of life, laws and truths, etc. I healed blocks within me that I had never recognized before inspite of ongoing therapeutic supervision and group work. I came to feel at peace and more whole within myself than I had believed possible. Ultimately my entire world view altered. I see this incredible change within myself as a switch of systems. I had been successfully living in 'The Box System' as I have come to call non-Native family systems, and switched to 'The Circle System' - the system I see Native families living in or returning to live in.

This model of two social systems is an integration of what I have learned personally and professionally. It is the culmination of hours of experience in my own healing and hours of experience working with individuals, couples and families. It is the result of my continuous learning process with elders and Medicine teachers.

In reading the results of work by several other current authors, notably Anne Wilson Schaeff, Riane Eisler, and John Bradshaw I have discovered mirrors of my own work and experience. Anne Wilson Schaeff works in the field of addictions and talks of two systems - the Addictive System (The Box) and The Living Process System (The Circle): note; my interpretation. Riane Eisler is a 'female humanist' and an archaeologist. She has rewritten the archaeological findings of Old Europe and describes two systems active across time and European cultures - the dominator or Androcratic System (The Box) and the partnership or Gylanic System (The Circle): note; my interpretation. John Bradshaw is a family systems therapist like myself who has updated and integrated family systems theory, added spirituality which had previously not been

discussed, and presents it to non-Native society in a manner which The Box System understands. In doing so, John clearly states that "our society is sick because our families are sick. And our families are sick because we are living by inherited rules we never wrote." Our present sick society is operating in the Box System.

II. THE BOX SYSTEM AND THE CIRCLE SYSTEM MODEL

Both Social Systems are composed of these same parts:

- *human beings
- *families
- *communities
- *cultures
- *laws and rules
- *relationships
- *roles
- *language
- *basic human needs
- *a history
- *a means of using information
- *a governing body
- *interaction between parts (communication)

One Social System I call THE BOX and the other Social System I call THE CIRCLE.

*** It is important I believe to note here that when looking at a living system composed of as many parts as a Social System has, each part being its' own unique system, it can only truthfully be stated that a system description applies more often than not. It is impossible for such a beautifully complex alive Whole to operate in an absolute manner constantly time after time. There are too many variables. ****

THE CIRCLE SYSTEM

I call this system The Circle System because it sees life as just that - a circle. This view comes from the knowledge that Mother Earth and most living beings upon her are in the shape of a circle and/or live in a cyclical system. The goal of the Circle

System is to live in peace and harmony with all living creatures, Mother Earth overall. Therefore, since she is a circle, so then must humans live in a circle.

The indigenous people of the earth have by and large maintained their cultures overtime within the Circle system. Here in North America, the many Native cultures of the First Nations People were traditionally founded for thousands of years in the Circle System. Some cultures were more rigid than others, some had some hierarchical characteristics, and all evolved and changed over time. First Nations' cultures achieved varying degrees of evolution in the Circle System. However, under the care of the Circle System, North America flourished and offered abundant food, medicines and prosperous, healthy lifestyles to Native peoples.

In European and Asian tribes the Circle System also evolved and flourished. During the Neolithic Age in Europe the Circle System was highly developed and a major degree of peace and harmony was created and maintained. This period of time is believed to be from approximately 7000 B.C.E. until 2500 B.C.E. Eastern mysticism and religious philosophies, active today and being revived throughout the world are based in ancient Circle traditions and teachings of Asian tribes.

I believe we are each born as 'circles' - whole and perfect and intuitively wise.

The primary characteristics of the Circle System are as follows;

**the Circle System is egalitarian i.e. the relationship between every living creature is considered equal as fellow living spirits - in <u>partnership.</u> This applies to the plant, animal, mineral, and human systems and applies to all sizes and shapes, ages and stages.*

**the focus of the Circle System is on life and peacefulness*

**the Circle System is generally matrilineal i.e. children and families see the female as the creator of life and generally take their name and their formal life training from the female's relatives.*

**the Creator of life is female and the Co-Creator is male. It takes two living in a relationship of balance and harmony to create life.*

**the Earth is considered female as she is the giver and maintainer of life. As with all females, she must be respected and honored - whatever is taken from her must be taken by asking, with as little*

disruption to her as possible, and then be replaced.

**the centre of our life is our Spirit. We are all equal in Spirit and connected to the Great Spirit or God or Creator. Spirit is androgynous i.e. a whole perfect balance of male and female.*

**we are living this lifetime in order to learn and evolve spiritually. Each of us has many lifetimes on Mother Earth.*

**as children we enter life straight from the Creator and therefore, as newly arrived spirits are particularly precious. We are protected, nourished and our needs are met by the entire family and community. Usually we remain physically connected to our mother's bodies by being wrapped close to her for the first year of life.*

**as children and free spirits, we are carefully watched for safety and allowed to play freely and explore Mother Earth for the first 8 - 12 years of life. During this time, we watch and observe how the adults around us live and perform roles, tasks and relationships. As we are ready, we are given the privilege of doing some of these roles and tasks. Usually we ask the adults for that privilege.*

**at approximately 12 years of age, we begin formal training from our elders. This formal training is based upon strengthening our inner awareness of our Selves and our innate Wisdom. Therefore, highly disciplined experiential tasks are assigned individually and in small groups, such as endurance tests, fasting, and vision quests. Based upon the Wisdom and individual strengths of each person, we are groomed then to take specific roles in the community and family. These roles are for the benefit of life and peacefulness for all.*

**Women are next to the children in their closeness to the Creator. Women are the creators of new life and new ideas. Women have very special bodies that cleanse themselves in cycle with the moon every month. During this cleansing period, a woman's power is at its height and she must be respectful that she not overpower others. It is considered best if women in their 'Moontime' meet together away from the main community and family. This then creates a very strong bonding and women's circle.*

**It is during this cleansing time that women have many visions and inner awarenesses - every monthly cycle therefore is a vision quest. These visions are shared with her family and community for the benefit of all. Ultimately what is given to her is used to create a more peaceful and loving life.*

**Men are next to women in their closeness to the Creator. They work with women to be co-creators, and provide women with emotional, spiritual, mental and physical support in order that a*

peaceful life can be created and maintained. They protect the women, the children and the elders from harm and take roles in the family and community that allow the women and children to freely honor and create life.

**Because men do not go through a natural cleansing process, it is important for them to have cleansing ceremonials on a regular basis.*

**Elders are women and men who have moved through the life cycle from the Creator to children to their role as women or men. In moving through the cycle, they learn and grow and attain more knowledge (i.e. experience and factual knowledge) than anyone else in the system. Therefore, they are highly honored. As people approach old age, they return through the system to stand with the children next to the Creator and prepare for their death. While standing next to the Creator, they become the wise teachers of the children.*

**Learning is considered to be primarily experiential and is taught by observing adults in day to day life; through guidance and support while taking initial steps in copying adults; and through formal training.*

**Learning is a direct experience between a person's inner awareness and the world around them. This is based upon the belief that wisdom and knowledge is innate within each person, and is centred in the belly - the solar plexis - the intuitive.*

**Mental functioning must harmoniously respond to the innate wisdom in the belly, providing form and function for the individual in the physical world.*

**Learning is considered to be a Whole process that combines the four main elements of life - the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental. Therefore, teaching is performed in such a way that innate seeing and knowing are developed in a Whole way within each person. The teacher is a role model and a guide and a supporter and a debriefer. Most often, the teacher - student ratio is 1:1.*

**The student is always 'right' - their knowing is their knowing and is to be shared with others for the mutual benefit of all.*

**Life is considered to be a process i.e. there are key elements that apply to everyone and natural laws that apply to everyone. However, as each individual evolves through the stages of the life process they create their own individual life. Any differences between individuals are considered special and add 'spice' and variety to the family and community.*

**as individuals everyone contributes to the Circle. As part of the*

life process, what each person is and does goes out into the circle and then returns to them - 'what goes around comes around'. In this way, each person is asked to be totally accountable for their emotions, thoughts, spirit, and physical actions.

**Power is considered to be the inner strength and knowledge of each person. It is therefore very important for each person to know and develop their own strengths and awareness of their weaknesses. By doing so, individual power collectively becomes family and community power.*

**Reality is considered to be the inner awareness of each person in relationship with other living creatures around them, including Spirit. This reality is very large and often cannot be fully shared through language which is limiting. Therefore, drama, storytelling, allegories, myths, metaphors and art are commonly used in order to impart the knowledge of inner experience from one person to another.*

**Communication is direct. Within each person, what the wisdom of the belly says (intuition) is then directly relayed to the heart and the mind. It is in the heart and mind that the inner wisdom is translated and transformed into action in the physical world. This is commonly referred to as 'congruence'.*

**Communication between people is direct. What the belly wisdom says must be honored, and honest interaction is important. It is very important that people speak for themselves and let others know what they see, know, feel and think. In this way sharing of knowledge and experience can be imparted for the good of the Whole family and community. It is considered important to honor the life of each individual so there may be times that the direct communication is given in the form of allegory or story or drama or experiential teaching in order that the person may see for themselves.*

**Relationships are considered to be 'mirrors'. What we see in others is a reflection of ourselves. Very often, what is mirrored to us are parts of us that we cannot readily see in ourselves. The most intimate relationships, particularly between Creator and Co-Creator provide the greatest mirrors and therefore, the greatest teaching for each person.*

It is important to thank the relationship and the other person for the teaching of the mirror and use the knowledge for our own growth.

**Relationships are one of linkage - of partnership between all living creatures. This partnership allows all living beings to link together in a peaceful balance for the harmonious development of life and Oneness of All.*

*The goal of life is to achieve a Oneness with others - in relationship, within our Selves, in the family and community, with all creatures, and the Universe and Spirit.

*in order to achieve Oneness, our challenge is to 'let go' of the physical form. This means that material goods are to be used as tools and a means of accessing our inner awareness - of sharing with others. Money is considered one form of many forms for sharing physical gifts and services. It has no value beyond this.

*Life is considered to be a mirror of Mother Earth. There are two polarities - the 'darkness' and the 'light' or the 'negative' and the 'positive'. Both poles are important for learning, balance and harmony. Without darkness, it is impossible to see the light. Most of life takes place between these two poles.

Learning in life is the art of knowing both polarities and integrating and balancing them in our lives.

There is the possibility of 360 degrees in viewing and knowing and acting in life. All are right.

Within each person lies great energy - a molten moving alive mass of energy, feeling, physical functioning and spirit. These are held in place and form within a thin layer of skin.

Each person has an energy field around them that attracts and repels other energy fields.

Each person moves through time and space in a cyclical manner just as the seasons on Mother Earth constantly repeat themselves as the Earth moves in a circle through space. Life then is a Spiral.

*Life occurs in macroscopic and microscopic levels. Therefore, the Spiral of life has height and depth.

*Incense and plants are used to create altered states under well-disciplined conditions in order to increase self-awareness and Oneness with Spirit (letting go of the physical).

*Sex is a direct act of Spirit and is a special ceremony of healing, connection of Spirit and Oneness, and recreation of life.

*Life is considered to be the evolving of Wholeness - of developing all four parts of us to the best of our ability. This means that we are constantly in a cycle of 'letting go', giving, receiving, and learning.

*Whenever an event occurs in our lives, it is for our learning. We take the best from it and learn.

*Life is abundant and there is enough for all. Some may choose to have more abundance than others, but all can be prosperous.

*Events, feelings, thoughts are accepted for 'what is'. Upon their acceptance, the individual, family and community can then use their intuitive wisdom and mind to decide what action to take for the common good of all. Analysis and evaluation may be part of this decision-making.

*Ceremonies are held to give thanks to the Great Spirit for the passage of the life process, the marking of events in individual, family and community life.

*Physical care is considered very important. We are Spirits housed in physical bodies and can only continue to evolve in this lifetime as long as we have healthy bodies. Health includes physical endurance, daily cleansing, whole natural foods, fasting, and whole body cleansing in sweats.

*Chaos and change are seen as the constants of the universe. They are a challenge to the inner wisdom and learning of each individual.

*as humans, we are considered as 'pitiable' creatures in comparison to the vast enormous knowledge of the Universe and Creator. Always we acknowledge the vast mystery of the Universe, our connection to it through our intuitive and our own humbleness. It is in this manner that we access wisdom.

*we take only as much life as we need (animal and plant) for our own needs. The life in the plant and animal is honored for giving us life. Animals and plants are for-giving.

*Life is humorous and laughable, particularly the simple paradoxes.

*Opposition is considered the ultimate means of learning. Competition is considered destructive to life.

*it is believed that we can ask others to do only what we have done ourselves. In this way we honor partnership and life.

*exchanging between people is done as <u>sharing</u> - the equal giving and returning of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual gifts. This is done from a power base of awareness and trust - awareness of what can freely be shared and trust that others will freely share always.

*our <u>Power Base</u> is founded upon our spiritual centre within which provides great inner peace and insight; our connectedness with other living beings and Mother Earth who always provides.

THE BOX SYSTEM

I call this system 'the Box' because it basically describes life as just that - a box: we begin the Box when we are born, and then we grow up one side of the box to a legal age where we can drink and are declared adults; we pursue our adult life 'in our prime years' at the top of the box until we reach 40; at 40 we are 'over the hill' and begin travelling down the opposite side of the box until we hit bottom at retirement age; then we put in time in our 'leisure golden years' travelling across the bottom of the box until we meet the point where we entered life - and we die. Then we're buried in a box.

The Box System is the current dominant system in our society. It is administered by our elected government and civil service, maintained and recreated overtime by the prime institutions - the Church, the Legal System, the Economic System and the School System, and 96% of us are emotionally impaired to varying degrees by living in the Box System.

Historically, The Box System was brought to North America by Europeans escaping its' effects in Europe. It was the system primarily used by European cultures and has since been spread through contact around the globe to all four races. Here in Canada and North America it was forcibly digested by Native cultures through contact so that now the Box System is intimately known by Native and non-Native families.

The Box System has not always been the dominant system of European tribes. Until approximately 3200 years ago, the Circle System was used by Europeans of Old Europe and the Circle teachings have remained present, but dramatically hidden and weakened under the domination of the Box. According to Riane Eisler, it was waves of invasions from Indo-Europeans, specifically the Kurgan cultures which brought the dominating Box to Europe and changed the course of civilization for European tribes.

The primary characteristics of The Box System are as follows:

**it is patriarchal - it is a male dominated hierarchy*

**it idealizes war*

**creation is seen as male dominated*

*as a hierarchy it believes that life moves up and down. To be successful in the Box System you move 'up the ladder'. If you are unsuccessful, you stay at the bottom of the system and may not even attempt to climb the ladder. The person at the top of the ladder is closest to God - is supreme. This person also receives the most money. More often than not, the person at the top of the ladder is male.

*the Box believes that it is superior to all other systems or cultures.

*the Box believes that it knows and understands everything

*the Box believes that it is possible to be <u>totally</u> logical, rational and objective i.e. mechanistic

*the Box believes that it is possible to be God - to be perfect.

*light is considered 'better than' dark; this refers to everything from skin color to clothing and paper, and night and day.

*males and male characteristics are considered 'better than' females and female characteristics

*the mental and the physical domains are the prime functions of the Box i.e. males are physically stronger and think concretely and logically. These are dominant male characteristics.

*emotions are considered inappropriate and seen as interfering with mental thought. Therefore emotions are actively negated, and through parenting and schooling, we are taught to withdraw, control and deny emotions.

*Spirituality is considered only within the realm of the Churches which are actively part of the Box. Anything spiritual outside the Churches is actively oppressed and negated.

Both emotions and spirit are the dominant female characteristics.

*Spirit (religion) is considered separate from all other systems in the Box.

*the greatest freedom of movement in the Box System is given to light-skinned males. The least freedom of movement is given to 'minorities' and to females. Therefore the least freedom of movement is given to dark-skinned females. Children also have little freedom.

*as a hierarchy a few people at the top rule the many people on the

bottom. This ruling is authority and domination in its weakest form, and abuse and oppression in its stronger forms. The people at the top (executives, government) are considered to be making the best decisions for everyone under their control. In actual fact, they are making decisions that will allow the Box system to continue functioning.

*The Box System is externally oriented. What goes on around us is more important than what is going on within us. We react involuntarily to events and information, look to others for guidance and approval, and generally follow externally imposed rules. Ultimately we believe that there is some Perfect Person who will arrive, save us and teach us and make the whole world better.

*we can speak with authority only if we have been declared an 'expert' and/or have special training and certificates which give us such authority externally. The 'expert' is someone whose knowledge is 'right' and should be followed.

*The Box System has a large set of rules by which people must live in order that the system can survive. These are generally 'shoulds' and are passed on from one generation to the other by informal and formal parenting, interaction with the older generation, and schooling. Very often these 'shoulds' are enforced by law. For example, children must attend formal schooling and must be present at school from their 7th birthday until their 15th birthday. Other examples, more informal ones, are that women should stay home, look after their husbands, have two children and be content as 'housewives'. Men should have a formal 9 -5 job, contribute to a pension plan for old age and generally be eager to climb the corporate ladder.

*These rules are basically living by a RECIPE. Every rule must be followed exactly in order to be perfect according to the Box. Many people react to these rules and break them on the sly, hoping they won't be caught and feeling guilty if they are. Teen-agers are particularly reactive to these rules.

*mental functioning is believed to be the key function of the human. The brain is highly prized and all wisdom and intelligence is believed to be housed here.

*religion is the dominant form of spirituality. There is one god who is male and who rules people from above. His interpretors here on earth are generally male priests. Religion is controlled by churches who as institutions within the Box System, replicate the Box System hierarchy. God is opposed by the Devil who lives in darkness.

*God is judgemental - if we do not make it to Heaven then we are condemned to live in Hell. It's generally one way or the other.

information, events, thoughts, feelings, behaviour are all processed by people using Negative Critical Thinking. Therefore any event in a person's life will first be viewed negatively, then negatively analyzed (criticism) by using the thought processes in the brain. Any emotions at this point are actively controlled, subdued and denied. The mind then evaluates whether this event fits into one area (Bad) or the other area (Good). 'Bad' and 'Good' can be alternated with 'Right' and 'Wrong'. The Box System determines through a series of informal and formal rules ('shoulds') what is 'bad' and 'good', and 'right' and 'wrong'. Any event that clearly does not fit into either of these two categories is considered a 'gray area' and people generally are very uncomfortable with gray areas. It is considered best to take gray areas and force them to fit into one category or the other.

- *when any negative is discovered in a person or a statement or an event, the entire person, statement or event can be dismissed or considered totally negative. This is not always done, but can be if it is considered necessary to take control of the person, the conversation, or the event or to dismiss what is being said.*

- *what we perceive as persons to be real is often contrary to what the Box System believes about superiority, logics, etc. When this occurs, we deny our own senses and use our minds to convince ourselves that what we perceived was not true. This process is primarily used with children.*

- *what the Box does not understand, does not perceive, does not see or hear, or cannot measure is invalidated, usually through logical negative thinking, abusive verbal behaviour and persuasion with money.*

as well as having a top and bottom, the Box has two sides. Again these are labelled 'right' and 'wrong' or 'good' and 'bad'. In the Box people relate to each other generally by 'taking sides'. Sometimes this can become confusing because after trying one side, people see the other side and then they switch sides. This switching is considered 'bad'. Sometimes people refuse to 'take sides' and remain 'sitting on the fence' or uninvolved.

Labelling is used as a means of determining whether something is bad or good, right or wrong. Generally these labels are negative and are based upon negative critical thinking and limited observation. Example of labels are: lazy, stupid, dumb, nice. Once a label has been given then we know what action is appropriate in relationship to what has been labelled.

The Box System is based upon fear of life. Life is hard and a struggle, and it takes great survivorship skills to endure.

*Mother Earth is considered 'wild' or 'wilderness' and she is feared. Wilderness is considered as a potential area to be 'tamed' or civilized, and this is done through hard work and careful planning on the part of many individuals.

It is the minority of people in the Box system who feel comfortable 'outside in the wilderness'. Generally parks are created in the midst of the cities and towns in order for people to have a 'natural' place to go.

*animals are generally considered 'wild' animals and feared. This includes small and large animals. When a spider is sighted, it is quite common for a fear reaction to set in and the spider to be killed.

*some animals are kept in pens and confined to ranges for food. Beef and dairy products are considered the best form of protein food.

*The box in the form of a square or rectangle dominates this system physically. It is visually apparent as the preferred form for buildings, homes, money, furniture, etc.. Straight lines are preferred over curved lines. This is apparent in road building, division of land, logging, etc.

*The use of alcohol, tobacco and caffeine-containing foods are regularly consumed by most people in order to create and maintain an altered state.

* Sharing and exchange of goods and services between people always involves money. Money however is a huge force unto itself and has many systems attached to it. Money is obtained through 'work'. The more you work, the higher up the ladder you climb, and so the more money you have. For those people in the bottom of the box, a system of 'free money' or welfare has been designed to enable them to continue to take part in the Box. However, these people are considered shameful by others above them and 'a drain on the economy'.

* Many people study the use of money, attend prestigious educational institutions to receive degrees in how to manipulate it, count it and use it to make it grow and control others; individuals, families, corporations, big business, multinationals, and governments design their entire lives around it. Many large buildings are erected for the exchange of money, and to print and store it. Many people in the Box system spend their entire lives working just with money. Machines have been designed that will count, dispense and manipulate money in addition to the people who already do this daily.

*The most important people in the Box have money - the least

significant have little or no money. Therefore, people in the Box system are classified according to 'class' or hierarchy within the system based upon how much money they earn.

Ultimately, money is used to control and move people where the system wants them to go. Money equals power and power equals money. This can also be a life and death situation; to have money means freedom to live - to not have money feels like or can physically bring death.

**teaching the laws and rules of the Box System to children is called 'parenting' and 'schooling'. Children are molded to fit into the Box generally by using verbal and emotional manipulation. Sometimes physical manipulation is used as well. This manipulation inhibits the Spirit of the child. In some cases, manipulation becomes very abusive and the child loses Spirit and gains shame.*

**as human beings we are forced to mold and reshape ourselves to fit into the Box. More often than not this molding and reshaping involves the following:*

- *dishonesty*
- *withdrawal*
- *denial*
- *dependency*
- *controlling others*
- *abusing others*
- *self-abuse*
- *hopelessness*
- *perfectionism*
- *judgementalism*
- *fear/terror*
- *anger/rage*
- *acceptance of myths as truths*
- *low self-esteem*
- *shame*
- *self-centredness*
- *defensive behavior such as lying, stealing, niceness, aggression, etc.*
- *co-dependency*
- *addictions to alcohol, drugs, relationships, food, etc.*
- *blocking*

**Power is defined as the amount of control <u>one has over</u> other people, money, systems, our emotions, our lives, etc.*

**Communication between people is based upon a feeling of negativity within each person i.e. we are bad or fear being attacked or feel ashamed of ourselves, etc. The four dominant forms of communication are:*

- *<u>Pleasing or Placating</u>*
- *<u>Blaming</u>*
- *<u>Supereasonable or Computing</u>*
- *<u>Distracting or Clowning</u>*

Each of these communication styles is aimed at reducing the pressure on oneself and if necessary, placing it upon the other person.

These styles are the norm and are used daily in all kinds of interactions.

**It is common to present information by using negatives and in terms of war and fighting. For example, the recent move to promote literacy throughout the U.S. has been presented as "Attack Illiteracy". Similarly environmental concerns are usually presented in the negative - "Wage War on Garbage" etc. News reports focus upon the negative and generally use a language of loss, fighting, survival, etc.*

**Indirect communication is considered better than direct communication. Therefore, a message from one person to another generally goes through a third or fourth party. The more difficult the message, the more often indirect communication is used. The most common form of indirect communication between two people is gossip. Here, a third party is discussed in absentia as a screen for sharing the feelings, thoughts and viewpoints of the two people talking. The two people talking never actually declare themselves and take accountability for themselves.*

**Speaking for oneself and about oneself is considered 'forward', 'aggressive', 'selfish', 'self-centered' or 'precocious'. This particularly applies to women and children.*

**Reality is believed to be our thoughts and our language as written, read and spoken. As language limits us by the number and kinds of words it has, then so is reality limited.*

**Books containing written words are considered 'right' and next to God. If a thought has been committed to paper and printed for others to read, then it is 'fact'. The most educated people in the Box i.e. professors at universities must commit many words to paper and publish them yearly in order to maintain their position as wise people.*

**If a thought or an idea has not been written in a book, then it is considered highly suspect and is open to denigration.*

**any reality outside the realm of thought, for example mysticism is considered 'weird' or 'strange' and can be actively persecuted and oppressed.*

**Learning is considered to be the memorization of the symbols that are used to write the spoken language. Twelve to eighteen years of a person's life can be spent learning to read, write and speak the language - and to view the world through the eyes of the Box*

language. The language becomes more complex as the learning continues. Special teachers are trained to teach such complex languages as medicine, psychology, mechanics. Original thought upon the part of students is usually negated and the focus is placed upon memorizing thoughts in books and repeating them to the satisfaction of the teachers. Upon satisfactory completion, a piece of paper with written symbols upon it is presented to the student.

**Formal learning is generally considered to be inwardly processed within the student in a step-wise logical manner. Therefore, in the School System teaching is generally done in a verbal, didactic, step-by-step logical manner. Learning is considered best done in an enclosed controlled environment i.e. a building. Generally, the teacher is the imparter of information, the student repeats the information given and then is tested on their ability to repeat accurately. Usually the ratio of teacher to student is 1:12+.*

**During formal learning, when a student does not accurately repeat the information given by the teacher, a 'mistake' has been made. The more mistakes made by the student, the more 'bad' or 'stupid' the student. Great effort and attention is given to 'bad' students to have them repeat accurately as their performance reflects upon the ability of the teacher to impart knowledge. However, eventually 'bad' students leave the school system.*

**Relationships between people in the Box are generally ones of domination-submission, abuser-victim, oppressor-slave. A great deal of the time it is the informal body language and day to day interaction that create and maintain these up-down relationships.*

The relationships can maintain themselves overtime as up-down or they can see-saw back and forth. This means that sometimes one person is 'up' - the abuser - and that at other times that same person is 'down' - the victim.

These kinds of relationships exist everywhere - between friends, on the job, casual acquaintances, neighbours, extended family, parent and child, man and woman.

**the most common form of intimate relationship between a woman and a man is based upon the up-down relationship. Typically the woman does the nurturing of the children, the man, and if there is time, herself. She is also the prime caretaker of the children and home. This is called 'overfunctioning' in terms of family dynamics. Typically the man leaves the home on a daily basis and earns money in order that all his family may live in the Box. He is seldom involved with nurturing himself, his woman or his children, and usually feels uncomfortable with closeness and has few supportive friends. This is called 'underfunctioning' in terms of family dynamics. However in terms of social dynamics, the man is*

considered successful i.e. most important - 'up' and the woman is considered as doing her duty and not that important - 'down'.

**in the Box, women show common signs of victimization; low self-esteem, low motivation and low self image. Typically they are paid the least for whatever job they do outside the home.*

**in the Box, men show common signs of dehumanization; disrespect to others, unaccountability, high aggression, violence towards others.*

**Families generally organize around 4 different forms in order to survive in the Box:*

-Perfectionism - this leads to addictions

-Co-dependency - this leads to loss of self for family members

-Persecution - this leads to physical and sexual abuse

-Shame - this leads to suicide, violence and death

**having money and power in the Box allows for the greatest freedom of movement in the system. Therefore, the most abuse and oppression generally occur amongst people at the bottom of the Box, and the least amount of abuse and oppression generally occur amongst people at the top of the Box.*

**the overall result of living and working in the Box is War and Trauma. The Holocaust of World War II is a result of Box interaction and domination. In daily interaction, war continues within the family and workplace and other words are used to replace 'war' - abuse, disrespect, harrassment, bossiness, blaming, etc. Trauma is the result of war and in the family and workplace, 'trauma' is replaced by victimization, laziness, shyness, low self esteem, mental illness etc.*

**exchanging between people is done as <u>give and take</u>. This is done mostly on a physical basis and is based on keeping count of what is given, so that the other owes the giver. The taker is usually mistrusted. People can become enmeshed in one of these roles i.e. taker or giver and need to find the opposite role in order to live their lives. Give and take can easily become out of balance, and resentment and persecution easily result.*

**our <u>Power Base</u> is founded upon the collection of physical goods and the ability to use aggressive behavior to collect more goods and services from others.*

III. DISCUSSION OF THE TWO SYSTEMS - CONTRASTS AND INTERACTION

It is paradoxical that the Box System arrived here from Europe in the form of individuals and families escaping its persecution and destruction - to have these same individuals and families repeat the system here upon First Nations' People. However, over the past 200 to 250 years since major contact between the two systems, it is important to note that the desire for change and achievment of peace still continue to motivate the Box System here in North America to some degree. Women have more freedom on this continent than in any other place. There is an openness within the Box System here that does not exist on other continents - and there is less oppression and domination. When reviewing the primary characteristics of the Box System listed above, exceptions can be noted for nearly all characteristics - and many of the notable changes have occurred recently. For example, physical 'discipline' of women and children by their male family 'owners' was legal at the time of contact and until the '60's was acceptable behaviour. Recently this legally has been reversed and been renamed as 'physical abuse' and therefore, unacceptable.

Contrasts

The most striking contrasts between the two systems are:

**Power* - the Circle sees power as inner awareness and intuitiveness and existing within each person, to be shared together for the good of the Whole; the Box sees power as the degree of control and domination each person has over their emotions and actions, as well as over others around them.*

**Relationship* - the Circle believes in partnership and a balanced female-male relationship with the greatest honor going to the woman. The Box believes relationships are dominant male over female and children and others in the system.*

**Mirrors in Relationship* - the Circle sees what it is that is most appealing or bothersome in a relationship and uses it as information about the self. The Box takes the mirror of relationship and analyzes the mirror itself - it is bad, held too close, has the wrong beliefs, behaves in ways they do not approve, etc.*

**Spirituality* - the Circle believes that spirit is androgynous, that it is within us and connected to all other spirits, is loving and forgiving; the Box believes that spirit is male and is controlling and outside ourselves, is rigid and judgemental.*

*Approach to Life - the Circle believes that life is abundant, joyous, and a constant learning - we must be open to give and receive. We live life as a process and individually create what fits best for each of us; the Box believes that life is survival, hard and fearful - we must fight for what we get. We live life according to a recipe in order to achieve perfection.

*Learning - the Circle believes that learning is intuitive and the interaction of all four parts of us (emotional, physical, mental and spiritual); the Box believes that learning is step-by-step and logical and only mental.

*Teaching - the Circle believes that teaching is experiental - the development of innate wisdom present within each person; the Box believes that teaching is didactic - the imparting of learned knowledge in a dominator-submissive manner.

*Language - the Circle believes that language is limiting to experience and is simply the best verbal reflection of ourselves that we can create; the Box believes that language usage and manipulation is the ultimate mark of a learned person.

*Wisdom - the Circle believes that wisdom is within us and comes to us directly through our intuitive connection with the Universe; the Box believes that the skill of language usage and repetition of learned behaviour creates wisdom.

*Polarity - the Circle believes that both poles are essential to balance and wholeness, and that the poles ask us to integrate opposition and put them together in harmony; the Box believes that there is a duality and that this imposes constant distress upon us as humans.

*Negative - the Circle believes that negativity and blackness are essential in order to contrast with positiveness and light - therefore the negative is to be honored, accepted and respected; the Box believes that negativity and blackness are bad and should be eradicated or controlled.

*World View - the Circle believes everything is an expression of the Creator, to use and to share together; the Box believes that 'what is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine'.

*Response to the World - the Circle believes that we need to see and accept 'What is'; the Box believes that we need to always ask 'What is wrong here?'

*Money - the Circle sees money as one of many ways of exchanging gifts and goods and services; the Box sees money as the means for surviving life and therefore has developed complex systems for manipulating, counting, using and administering it.

*Separateness - the Circle sees separateness as our own boundary of Self in the total Oneness and interconnectedness of All; the Box sees separateness as necessary for survival - we are each separate from one another - the individual is the most important.

Interaction between the Two Systems

The Circle System accepts what is and seeks partnership - the Box System moves to dominate and control. Upon meeting, these two systems in North America initially operated in the Circle System. Gradually over time and an increase in the Box System population, oppression and control was actively imposed upon the Circle System. In many instances, this involved active physical warfare with Circle System Nations defending themselves to the best of their ability.

I have noted that the results of warfare exist psychologically within First Nations People irregardless of a history of active physical warfare or not. Just simple interaction over time with the Box System produces the same results. Recent research has identified Post Trauma Stress Syndrome as present in VietNam war veterans. This stress syndrome exhibits such characteristics as;

- high levels of anxiety
- sexual dysfunction
- negativity (hopeless) approach to life
- use of addictive substances
- family dysfunction

I have concluded that the Box System being oriented to oppression and warfare can produce trauma through overt physical warfare or through daily interaction overtime. One psychologist refers to the interaction between Europeans and First Nations' People as 'soul murder'. Interaction such as confinement to reservations, reversal of promises made, removal of children from homes, proactive Box System education of children without the presence or consent of their parents have been key in creating the trauma of war.

These same war characteristics apply to individuals and families within the Box. Persons who have been traumatized by physical and sexual abuse, and prolonged emotional abuse exhibit Post Trauma Stress Syndrome.

For the Circle System the interaction with the Box System represents an enormous learning. As one of my Medicine Teachers stated, "We prayed for strength and all these people arrived - 250 for every one of us. We didn't know how strong we were! Now we know that strength is letting go and losing nearly everything".

When the two systems meet, the perception of the other is intriguing. The Circle System views the Box as upside-down and backwards to the natural order of Mother Earth. My experience of viewing the Box was one of shock and amazement - how could people actually treat each other and other living creatures with such unawareness and disrespect?! It is reported orally that Native people at the time of contact viewed these Box system creatures as 'crazy' and pitiable. Black Elk states that when he saw his first whiteman at the age of 10 he believed him to be sick.

The Box System views the Circle System as soft, easy and very strange. It is so different from the Box that the Circle is feared and negatively criticised as bad. Judgemental labels are created that assume people of the Circle are stupid, and cannot 'make it in life' because they do not live according to the Box. Beliefs of the Circle are negated and dismissed. The Box then makes it its' business to teach Circle people how life really <u>should be</u> lived.

IV. <u>SUMMARY</u>

Black Elk, the powerful Sioux Medicine Man said: "You realize that in the sacred hoop we will multiply. You will notice that everything the Indian does is in a circle. Everything that they do is the power from the sacred hoop, but you see today that this house is not in a circle. It is a square. It is not the way we should live. The Great Spirit assigned us a certain religion and etc. The power won't work in anything but circles. Everything is now too square. The sacred hoop is vanishing among the people. We get even tents that are square and live in them. Even the birds and their nests are round. ...We Indians are relative-like to the birds. Everything tries to be round - the world is round. ...Now the white man has taken away our nest and put us in a box and here they ask us to hatch our children, but we cannot do it. We are vanishing in this box."

The Circle System maintains life to varying degrees while dominated by the Box. This can be noted in the continuing demands by First Nations' People for land settlements, education, and fair treatment within the Box. This can also be noted by womens' increasing demand for equality with men within the Box and a demand for respect for women's bodies.

As a therapist/healer, I believe that healing is actually switching systems from the Box to the Circle. This happens overtime and continues throughout the lifetime of the individual if necessary. For First Nations' People this healing is aided by the recent emergence of ancient teachings of the Circle and by the concerted effort to return to a reformulation of the traditional cultures. However, for descendents of European tribes the healing is one of searching in many cultures for Circle teachings, and reaching back a thousand or so years to the traditional Circle. Recent research by Starhawk and others is documenting the Wicken Tradition of Europe and the worship of the Goddess. In Scotland, industrial workers in Edinburgh are spending week-ends in the highlands, reformulating and reliving the clan teachings.

The Box has created so much institutionalized abuse over a lengthy time in the European tribes that domination and oppression have been normalized and are difficult for people to even recognize as abusive. For non-Native people the healing process therefore is very challenging and demanding. At present most non-Native people do not even recognize they need to heal.

I also believe that each of us, irregardless of our family and cultural teachings, intuitively knows the Circle. We are born as Circles - as pure love and light. The Box is learned survival behaviour that has taught us to be afraid and powerless. Therefore, when we have the courage and support to honor our intuition and live life as a process there is an inner sense of 'coming home' to the Circle.

I see the Box System as a highly effective contrast to the Circle System. It asks the Circle through sheer opposition to the system to act on what the Circle believes in - partnership and harmony. These two dynamics are incredibly challenging especially when the Box System is adding oppression to the diversity that already naturally exists on Mother Earth. However, as in all relationships, 'the other' is our best teacher. If we believe in the Circle and we believe that the Circle must return in order for life to continue on this planet, then we look to the Box so that we can more clearly see ourselves and what it is we have to heal. Eventually we can come to a point of thanking the Box for letting us see more clearly. And we can thank the Box for asking us so strongly to return to the Circle.

Here in North America, the Box has been the norm for 250 years. And it is here that all four races now live. We are all One together in the Box with First Nations' People actively moving away and back to the Circle. The Medicine predictions say that here on Turtle Island we have the opportunity to come together as an harmonious human family living in partnership in peace and Spirit. I believe this is very possible. And I see that it is First Nations' People who lead the return to the Circle.

There is great opportunity at present for the Circle System to reformulate and move once more into a partnership position. Women have a certain degree of freedom, men are beginning to acknowledge their emotions, the Box System has been softened and rounded over time by demands from within it for equality and concern for human endeavours, and, most important, First Nations' People are incredibly strong and becoming stronger, are regaining personal and collective power, and First Nations' People are most knowledgable in the system of the Circle.

The Circle lives. Like the Phoenix, the Circle rises from the ashes of near death with renewed life and vigourous strength.

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